

AS SEEN IN

# PERIOD LIVING

TRADITIONAL HOMES, INTERIORS, GARDENS, ANTIQUES & RENOVATION

READERS' HOMES

## FAMILY TRADITION

This 19th-century farmhouse has been in Peter Summers' family for more than a century. His wife Jane has respected that history during the renovation of their home over the years

FEATURE HEATHER DIXON PHOTOGRAPHS COLIN POOLE

Jane Summers wasn't about to make sweeping changes when she moved into her new husband's family home decades ago. Peter was born and grew up in the 19th-century farmhouse in Lincolnshire and every room is full of special memories, so Jane wanted to renovate it gradually, without taking away any of its personal history. 'Peter's great grandparents lived on the farm around 1900 and when I moved here I realised it had changed little over the years', explains Jane. 'It was a practical, hard-working house: I remember helping Peter's mother to wash eggs in a big stone sink in the kitchen,

make butter, cook on side ovens and do the laundry in a washing copper. There were rooms called the bacon chamber, a groom's room and a dairy, all named after their various functions.'

But when their daughters Annabel and Rachael were born, Jane wanted to update the farmhouse to create a more comfortable family home. This included installing a damp proof course, much needed central heating, and new kitchen units in what was initially just a breakfast room. 'The floor tiles here are original but they used to sit on bare earth and there was ivy growing through the floor, so Jane and Peter lifted

BELOW The farmhouse was originally a small single-storey dwelling. OPPOSITE PAGE TOP LEFT Jane and Peter with their flock. TOP RIGHT The grandfather clock was stored in Jane's family's attic for over 50 years. BELOW The formal dining room has a classic feel – formal & built-in blue is a similar colour to the bold paint used on the walls.



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them all, poured out a concrete floor and relaid the tiles on top. They also knocked out a wall between the old cloakroom and pantry to create a small sitting room; the groom's room then became a bedroom. 'Had there used to be two staircases, one leading to the maid's quarters, and the one for the main house,' adds Jane, 'so we took out the back stairs and linked the whole building together.'

These improvements were completed 25 years ago, but Jane has made lots of smaller, subtle changes since then. For instance, bathrooms have been updated sensitively, retaining period baths and basins where practical, but adding simple white sanitary ware when needed. Jane chose pale carpets and floor and wall tiles to keep the rooms neutral and elegantly functional. She also replaced a 1950s fireplace in the dining room with a smart stone surround that is more in keeping with the formality of the room.

As well as being an immensely practical house, it has always been a sociable home: friends and family, and generations of farm workers have dropped in and out as they've gone about their daily work. 'When the

### KEY FACTS

Location Lincolnshire

Period Single-storey stone dwelling built circa 1800; the farmhouse was extended sideways in 1848, and then upwards in 1905

Size Six bedrooms

Owners Peter Summers runs the family farm, while his wife Jane operates a bed and breakfast business from home; they have two grown-up daughters, Annabel and Rachael, and two border collies, Nell and Ness

girls were growing up, it was full of activity', recalls Jane. 'Even when they were away at university, they'd always be bringing back friends at the weekends.' The turning point came when Rachael and Annabel got married within eight months of each other, with receptions at the farmhouse. Jane enjoyed playing host at those occasions, but some weeks later, when life had settled into a new, quieter routine, she realised how large the empty house seemed. 'Only half the house

BELOW Jane chose vintage floral fabric for the sitting room; the furniture is a relaxed mix of family pieces and recently bought antiques. OPPOSITE PAGE TOP LEFT The elegant lamp was a charity fair find. TOP MIDDLE AND RIGHT The dinner was bought two decades ago and was made with unfinished wood. Four generations of Jane and Peter's families have enjoyed using blue and white Italian Spode on a daily basis.

BELOW Peter exposed the original stone wall and brick fireplace to give the kitchen its rustic character; the table and chairs were bought years ago – Country Fine in Nottingham makes similar



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*'As well as being a practical house, it has always been a sociable home'*

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was being used,' says Jane. 'I missed having people around.' Peter continued to run the farm, and Jane decided to start her own bed and breakfast business by turning some of the bedrooms into rooms for guests (grayshambodge.co.uk). 'It's brought the house back to life,' she says. 'Although it's first and foremost our family home, I love meeting new people and having the house properly lived in again.'

This change in direction also meant Jane had an exemplary excuse to enjoy embarking on some interior decoration. She says: 'We live near Hemswell Antiques Centre in Gainsborough, which sells wonderful furniture, china and home accessories; it's impossible to return from there without having bought something, however small.' She didn't, however, furnish the house from scratch, throwing out the old; she has combined some of her finds with favourite inherited items – maintaining a very personal style to the family home, while adding her own stamp. Wanting the bedrooms to be light and comfortable, and to reflect the country

location and the age of the house, she chose a blend of white painted pieces, with antique wooden furniture, to provide that precise feel.

The kitchen, however, with its original exposed stone wall and a substantial old farmhouse table, is still the hub of the home, and everyone's favourite gathering place. 'It's always welcoming,' says Jane, who entrusts all her home baking to the new Aga. 'The old Victorian fireplace was undoubtedly beautiful but simply not very practical in this day and age.'

The house continues to be full of character. It's also full of surprises, as Jane explains: 'I only recently discovered that the windows had pull-up shutters that are hidden underneath hinged flaps. Even after all these years, I don't know everything there is to know about our home – I think you have to live in an old house for a long time before you really understand the way it works. I have always tried to decorate and furnish in a style that suits this particular house, without feeling the urge to follow trends.' —

**BELOW LEFT AND OPPOSITE PAGE TOP LEFT** Laura Ashley

curtains and white furniture create a fresh look in this guest bedroom. The Welsh throw was a wedding gift.

**BELOW** The cast iron bath is around 70 years old and is in perfect condition – Albion Bath Co sells similar.

**OPPOSITE PAGE TOP RIGHT AND BELOW** Jane has combined neutral colours in the master bedroom and its en-suite bathroom with elegant dark wood antiques, many of which came from Hemswell Antiques Centre. The walls are painted in Dulux Baby White.



**JANE SHARES HER RENOVATION TIPS**

'Install white bathroom suites, which are unlikely to go out of fashion, and change the look of the bathroom with painted wall colours and accessories.'

'Keep a list of every paint colour used in the house and buy a match pot for each so that stuffs can be painted over easily.'

'If you have room, store furniture you might be tempted to throw out. As fashions and room layouts change, old furniture can be cleaned up and re-used or painted. It saves a fortune in the long run.'



*Jane chose a mix of 'white painted pieces with antique wooden furniture'*

